

**Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee**
Minutes of January 20, 2014

Present: Elyse Seeley (Chair), Bill Faria, John Lyon, Bob Mantegari, Dianne Vosgien, (School Board Representative), Jeff Bryan (Selectmen Rep), Malcolm Allison, Krista Steger (via telephone)

Visitors: Dianne Butenas, Jennifer Butenas, Jim Votour, Melissa Votour, Ken Christiansen, Melissa Litchfield, Michael Morgan, Amy Mitchell, Jessie Hollister, Crystal Buswell, Liz Faria, Ron Kew, Amy Brown

Chairperson Elyse Seeley called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

1. Motion to approve draft minutes from January 13, 2014, Bob/Malcolm, with corrections, Approved, 7-1-1 abstention.

TOWN BUDGETS:

1. **Warrant Article (revised) Long Term Lease Agreement for new Fire Engine**, – Motion to open, Jeff/Dianne, The Selectmen support this agreement to lease/purchase a new fire apparatus because the Fire Department fleet is aging and needs to be replaced. It is worded generally to give the Board and the Fire Department the flexibility to purchase new equipment. Further, there is no appropriation this year for this warrant article, and the agreement calls for a down payment of 150,000.00 from the existing Capital Reserve in 2015. The down payment would be forfeited if escape clause is invoked. This lease agreement would require 5 annual payments of \$99,291.00 at a 2.62% interest rate beginning in 2015. There was lively discussion of the relative need of this equipment. A bond hearing has been scheduled for February 6, 2014 and a snow date of February 10, to coincide with the Budget Committee and School Budget public hearing. Motion to recommend approval of this warrant article, 2-5-1 abstaining: the motion to recommend failed. The WA is not recommended.
2. **Warrant Article- Police Cruiser – 4900-70-839** – Motion to approve, Jeff/Dianne, to replace a Police Cruiser. There are currently 5 cruisers, they average 150,000 miles per year and there is a need to replace one of the current cars because it has become too costly to repair and maintain. There are 3 vehicles with high mileage but only one will be taken out of service. The Police Department will need approximately \$36,000.00 for the purchase with \$4000 additional funding coming from the detail money. Approved, in the amount of \$36,000.00, 8-0.

Overall Budget Status

Elyse reviewed the first draft Brentwood Tax Impact grid for Town operating costs including the above warrants that were voted on. The impact (for town expenses that have been approved and recommended by Budcom), show a 3.84% increase, with a .275 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Motion to discuss the grid and tax impacts, Bob/Malcolm, 8-0. Discussed budgets in general. Once completed, we will provide this information for the newsletter prior to the public hearing. Malcolm asked for clarification of the need for a dump truck for Highway Department to ensure no further action is needed to complete this purchase.

SCHOOL BUDGETS:

1. Motion to discuss Swasey School Warrant #2, the new Teacher Contract, Dianne/Jeff. The overall 3 year contract shows a 2.3% increase per year, with a savings in the first year with a less expensive health plan, and then an increase per year in health care premium contribution of 1%, and then an additional .5% in years two and three. There was some discussion of the average salary this contract reflects and health care expenses to be paid by the District and Teachers as well. About 75% of the staff is at the top of their salary range, and continue to get an annual longevity stipend. Motion to recommend approval, Dianne/Jeff, approved 6-2.
2. Motion to discuss Swasey School Warrant # 3, Proposal for Full Day Kindergarten – Dianne/Bob. Dianne explained this warrant article was revised at earlier School Board meeting and now reflects best estimates of the cost of full day: an additional teacher and assistant, and costs associated with setting up the classroom and supplies/furnishings needed. \$120,000.00 includes approximately \$90,000.00 for teacher salary and benefits, \$21,000.00 for the assistant teacher, and \$9,000.00 for set up. This would bring the number of classroom teachers at Swasey to 20 total. No additional transportation would be needed for the estimated 51 full-time Kindergarten students. The Chair inquired, in light of the dramatic public interest in the program, if the committee members wanted to remain neutral on the WA to give the town's people a chance to decide. The committee voiced a need to take a stand on the cost issue as the Budcom role is confined to dollars and cents. Motion to recommend approval of this Warrant Article for starting a new program of full day kindergarten, 1-7: motion failed. The WA is not recommended.
3. Motion to reopen Swasey School Warrant #1, the Swasey Operating Budget, Bob/Malcolm. There was discussion of the overall budget, decreasing enrollment, overage of ½ classroom teacher currently. Discussion about reducing staff. Ron Kew pointed out that last year a teacher position was cut. Even though there are 20 less students the enrollment numbers fluctuate (12 students enrolled late this year). The student-teacher ratios may increase slightly if a position is cut and may impact the numbers up to 20 students to 1 (in second grade). Committee members took issue with whether or not 20-22 children in a class requires an additional teacher, as state guidelines recommend 25 to 1 in Elementary and 30 to 1 in Middle school. Last year, \$132,500.00 was to be returned to the general fund, the School Board expended @ \$32,000, so \$100 K was actually returned. There is \$36,000.00 in the Special Education Capital Reserve for unanticipated need. Budcom questioned whether the operating budget could be reduced by the cost of a teacher/benefits @100K. Elyse noted that once enrollments are determined, it is too late in the year to reduce staff and then there are more teachers than are required. Mr Morgan, School Superintendent, said the SAU could do a reduction in force and that would be determined in April by withholding a contract. The determination of enrollment and need for teachers would occur in the June/July timeframe. Mr. Morgan noted that if the impact of increased student to teacher ratios is minimal then there could be a reduction with \$ \$ returned to the voters as revenue. It is more difficult to add a teacher if needed if one is removed from the budget. Motion to close discussion and leave the Swasey School Operating Budget as previously approved, Dianne/Jeff, approved, 5-2-1.

NEW BUSINESS:

Elyse pointed out that two Budcom members terms are up, Krista and Bob. Also, there is an opening on the ERCSD Cooperative Budget Committee. Krista indicated she intends to file for both the Cooperative opening and the Budcom opening.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ken Christiansen requested the Budget Committee reopen and reconsider the Fire Department Bond for apparatus. Elyse advised we have considered this Warrant Article twice, and the committee members were very clear on their positions. There is no need to reopen it.

Mike Morgan reminded everyone of the Swasey School District Meeting on March 8. Attendance is generally very low and he encouraged everyone that could attend to do so.

Elyse noted there is a conflict between our Budget Hearing and the very important ERCSD Coop Deliberative Session. She noted that our hearing is informational only- but voting occurs at the Deliberative Session at the High School. Budget Committee members are excused from our Hearing if necessary. Both are scheduled for Thursday February 6, 2014 at 7PM.

Liz Faria asked to include the overall cost of all the items that had been considered and approved. She pointed out that the tax increase for a \$350,000.00 assessed home in town would cost an additional \$606.00. (Note: There would be an additional \$87.00 if the town approves the Full Day Kindergarten warrant for a total of almost \$700.00 increases in the next tax year).

Hearing Preparation:

Elyse advised that the Chair will finalize the tax impact grid, determine topics to be covered at the Public Hearing, and bring all to prepare for the hearing at our next meeting. We should be finished with budgetary issues and should be ready for both the Public Hearing and Town/School Meetings.

We meet next Monday, January 27, 2014. Jeff will be away and is excused.

8:29 pm Motion to adjourn, Elyse/Bob, approved 8-0

Minutes respectfully submitted by William C Faria